



DEP FACT SHEET

No Discharge Areas in Maine

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What is a “No Discharge Area”?

A “No Discharge Area (NDA) is a designated body of water (by the State) where discharge of treated or untreated sewage from all vessels is completely prohibited.

Does a NDA prohibit ALL discharges from vessels?

No, only sewage (toilet waste a.k.a. blackwater) or discharges that combine wastewaters are prohibited. Vessels may still discharge graywater alone. Graywater is the wastewater from sinks, showers and on-board laundries. On small vessels the blackwater and graywater systems are normally separate. In larger vessels like ocean liners and cruise ships, the wastewater is often combined. The combined discharge of blackwater and graywater whether treated or untreated is also prohibited.

What happens to boats operating in NDAs?

In general, all boats with installed toilets must have an approved and operable Marine Sanitation Device (MSD). The table below describes the different MSDs. Boats without installed toilets are unaffected.

Types of Marine Sanitation Devices		
MSD Type	Vessel Length	Effluent Treatment Standard
Type I	Less than or equal to 65 feet long	Fecal coliform bacteria less than 1000 colonies per 100ml. No visible floating solids
Type II	Greater than 65 feet long	Fecal coliform bacteria less than 200 colonies per 100 ml. Total suspended solids less than 150 mg per litre.
Type III (Holding Tank)	Any	No discharge

In NDAs all vessels must hold their blackwater until it is pumped out at a holding tank pumpout facility. If the vessel is equipped with a type I or II MSD, the vessel must be secured to prevent discharge and may be retrofitted with a holding tank (Type III MSD).

Are sewage treatment plants or other land based discharges affected by NDAs?

No. Discharges from land based sources are not affected by the NDA.

Why does the State want to designate NDAs?

Certain harbors or bays may need additional protection from pollution in order to protect, maintain or improve water quality. Designating a harbor or bay a NDA will help reduce sewage pollution from boats, decreasing pathogens, solids and nutrients in the water.

How does the State designate an area as an NDA?

In order to designate an area as an NDA, the State must apply to the United State Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) for authority under section 312(f)(3) of the Clean Water Act. The process is as follows:

- The State, with or without input from interested parties, identifies a waterbody(ies) that need additional protection from pollution.
- The State investigates whether the waterbody needs additional protection by evaluating current water quality, other sources of pollution, the natural resources potentially impacted and the number of boats using the waterbody.
- The State identifies the size and types of vessels in the waterbody, and identifies all sewage pumpout locations.
- The State prepares an application to the USEPA for the authority to designate the waterbody an NDA.
- USEPA reviews the application and if it finds that the pumpout stations are adequate issues a Notice of Determination in the Federal Register.

Are there any NDAs in Maine right now?

No. The Department is preparing an application for an NDA for all of Casco Bay.

Are there any NDAs in New England?

Yes. The following waterbodies are designated NDAs in New England.

New England No Discharge Areas		
MA – Buzzards Bay	MA – Harwich Harbor	RI – All Coastal Waters
MA – Waquoit Bay	MA – Stage Harbor	RI – Block Island
MA – Nantucket	MA – Wellfleet Bay	CT – Mystic/Groton area
MA – Barnstable 3 Bay Area	NH – All inland Waters	CT – Stonington Area

Once a NDA is established, who make sure that boaters comply?

Compliance is normally managed two ways. First, the State, marina operators, local authorities, and environmental groups all work together to educate boaters on the impacts of improperly managed sewage. Cooperation and voluntary compliance is key. Boaters themselves are the best advocates for NDA compliance. Second, the State works with the Coast Guard (who may delegate enforcement authority), State law enforcement, and local harbor masters on local strategies appropriate for the area.

Where can I get more information on NDAs?

The Department of Environmental Protection's NDA web site has a lot of information and links. Go to www.MaineDEP.com, Keyword "NDA".

If you have specific questions about Maine's program, call Pam Parker at 207-287-7905 or write her at:

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If you have questions about NDAs in general call Ann Rodney, USEPA, Region 1 at 617-918-1538 or write her at:

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